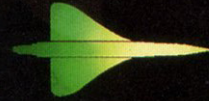


CONCORDE UNIQUE



MPH
1340

Supersonic Cabin Initiatives - A Series by Jennifer Coutts Clay, CMILT



British Airways Concorde

Concorde will always mean speed first, but it's not only the speed that we remember.

This is the 6th and final article in the Supersonic Cabin Initiatives Series. In **The Last Word: 40th Anniversary of Concorde**, written for *INFLIGHT* magazine, in March-April 2016, Jennifer Coutts Clay, author of *JETLINER CABINS: Evolution & Innovation*, celebrates the allure and challenge of supersonic flight, including critical marketing strategies that helped overcome some of the objections raised by passengers e.g. the constraints of the small-size fuselage were offset by emphasizing the superior cabin ambiance along with 5-star standards of welcome and hospitality.

If and when supersonic service is restored, airlines will no doubt have to sell clever marketing enticements yet again, but they will have the heritage and wings of Concorde's rhapsodic legacy to help them take-off.

THE LAST WORD

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the inauguration of supersonic passenger services, Jennifer Coutts Clay looks back at Concorde.

Concorde clients still rhapsodise over their memories of the amazing “Time Machine”, which “arrived before it had taken off”. The flight to New York from London or Paris took about three and a half hours, so with a five- or six-hour time difference, Concorde passengers flying west touched down in the US before they started their journey – in local time.

Imagine the excitement of travelling at twice the height of Mount Everest, near the edge of space, at twice the speed of sound and faster than a rifle bullet! And the push in the back as Concorde accelerated beyond Mach 1! Due to Concorde’s cruise altitude, passengers experienced only one sixth of the turbulence associated with subsonic flying.

THE ALLURE OF CONCORDE

Concorde passenger service standards were legendary, and this was the most prized market segment in the world of transportation. Newcomers wondered how they would feel inside the supersonic “needle-nose”, but regulars said the flight resembled a visit to a millionaire-class restaurant or yacht for an exquisite meal designed by superstar chefs, accompanied by the finest vintage wines and champagne.

Tickets generally cost about 20% more than the comparable first-class fare, a bargain for ‘time-is-money’ tycoons. Concorde passenger manifests invariably included the ultra-rich and famous: TV, movie and music-business icons, royalty, state officials and politicians. Naturally, cabin crew bid ferociously for

Concorde assignments, even though the 16-inch-wide aisle and cramped galley conditions on board the aircraft posed inherent operating challenges.

Concorde’s window panes measured just six and a half inches by four and a half inches, but window seats were greatly coveted because of the unforgettable views of the curvature of the planet and the indigo colour of the surrounding sky.

At British Airways, I was privileged to hold the position of controller corporate identity, and I worked on the “Landor” Concorde scheme, the flagship of the airline’s privatisation programme launched in 1985. Because British Airways was transitioning from government to investor ownership, the decision was taken to display the airline’s heraldic coat of arms on Concorde’s vertical tail-fin, replacing part of the quartered Union Jack of the previous livery.

SUPERSONIC SHADES OF GREY

Inside the cabin, we installed a luxurious leather upholstery scheme based on Balmoral grey from Andrew Muirhead Leather, Glasgow. Hailed as the epitome of refined business executive styling, the Concorde design treatment was subsequently emulated by airlines worldwide.

The commercial development of Concorde was headed by Gerry Draper, BA’s marketing director. “Many passengers were disappointed with the space provided, compared with a Boeing 747,” he explained. “We therefore claimed that the experience was similar to an



Jennifer Coutts Clay is an aviation consultant and the author of *Jetliner Cabins*. First published in 2003, the third edition of the book, *Jetliner Cabins: Evolution & Innovation*, is now available as an app. Jennifer has used her 35-plus year career in the industry – including senior positions at British Airways and Pan American – to collate over 130,000 words and more than 4,000 pictures across a wide range of cabin interior aspects, including product branding and passenger experience. App videos can be viewed on www.jetlinercabins.com.

E-Type Jaguar, compared with a Rolls-Royce. We used to feature the cabin environment as ‘like a spring morning’ because Concorde was the only airliner with a strong fuselage. Hence you did not suffer from the oxygen starvation that builds up on subsonic flights and makes a major contribution to jet lag.”

Could Concorde’s clientele ever have imagined the standards of luxury available today in the widebody cabins of the ‘gold-standard’ airlines? Opulent double-bedroom suites with separate living room and bathroom facilities; individual sleeper pods with fully flat beds and personal butlers; shower spas, child-minder areas, massage seat cushions, writing desks, vanity units and pre-ordered gourmet meals; larger windows, increased storage space and mood lighting; improved air quality and sound insulation; widescreen TV with thousands of on-demand entertainment options, including catalogue shopping, computer gaming, social networking, Wi-Fi and inflight connectivity ... what a list! ■

CONCORDE THE LAST WORD



Air France Concorde



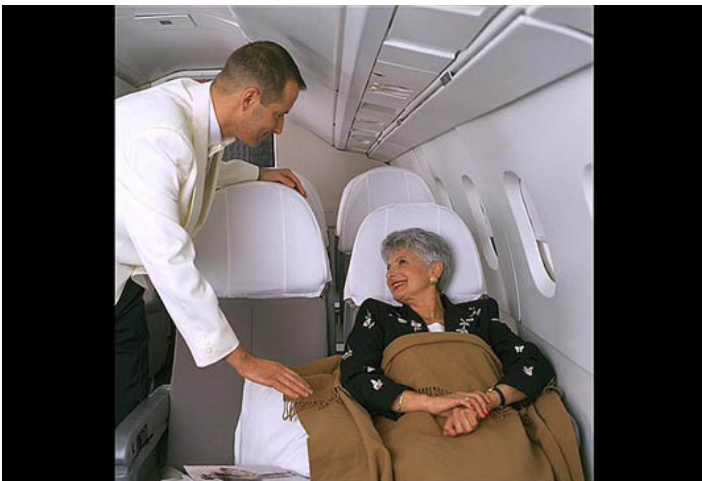
British Airways Concorde



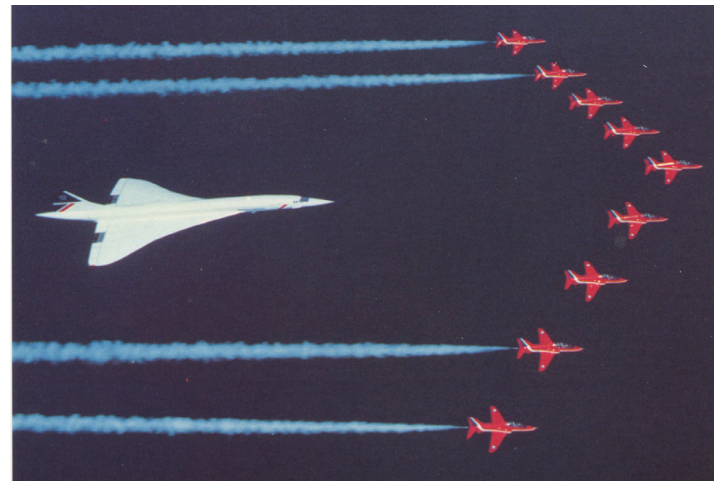
Air France Concorde



British Airways Concorde
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Air France Concorde



British Airways Concorde & The Red Arrows

BON VOYAGE!

A return to commercial supersonic flight is not guaranteed. Even United Airlines' order of Boom aircraft is, essentially, a document of intent. No aircraft has yet been certified. And how long will it take to design, develop, test and fly a new-generation supersonic engine while complying with evolving environmental and sustainability regulations?

In this Supersonic Cabin Initiatives Series, we reviewed the various aspects of Concorde operations, its challenges and opportunities. It's obvious why the notion of high-speed flight continues to capture our imagination. The key question is: can next-generation supersonic become a profitable venture that will enable greater numbers of passengers to enjoy the benefits of speed?



*Concorde Flight Deck Simulator, Toulouse, France
Courtesy The Pan Am Historical Foundation Museum*

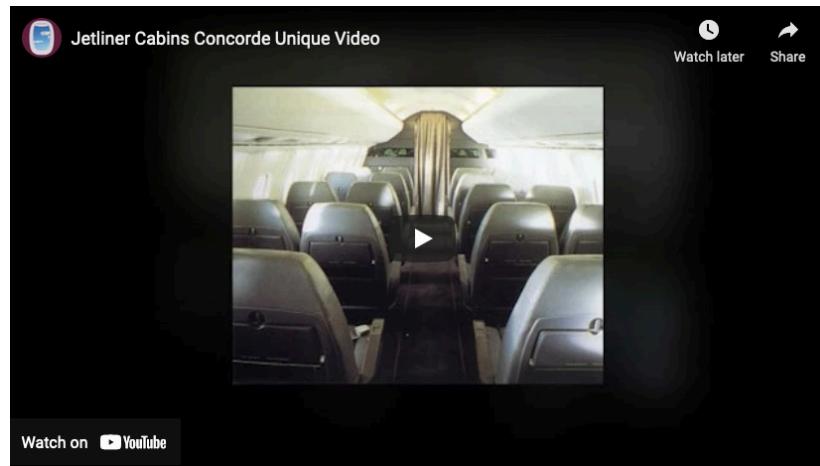
'What is now proved was once only imagined.'

William Blake, London (1757-1827)



Jennifer Coutts Clay is the author of *Jetliner Cabins: Evolution & Innovation*, still the only comprehensive guide to aircraft-cabin design, covering trends from the 1970s to the present day (www.jetlinercabins.com). At British Airways, Jennifer held senior positions including head of western USA (operations and sales), head of Scotland, and controller of corporate identity, responsible for the implementation of the US\$75m program during the privatization of the airline and fleet refurbishment, including Concorde. At Pan Am, as general manager of product design & development, Jennifer led a US\$25m passenger-experience upgrade. As principal of J. Clay Consulting, Jennifer supports historical aviation research. She is a member of The Cornell Club, The Institute of Directors, The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and The Wings Club (Golden Eagle Status). Jennifer is a founding sponsor of The Crystal Cabin Award, a founding member of The Pan Am Historical Foundation Museum, and she serves on The Concorde Advisory Committee at The INTREPID SEA, AIR & SPACE MUSEUM, New York City.

Watch the Jetliner Cabins Concorde Unique Video



Jennifer Coutts Clay visits British Airways Concorde G-BOAD (the record-breaking Alpha Delta) at The INTREPID Sea, Air & Space Museum, New York City.

Images in this article have been selected from the Concorde Picture Galleries displayed in *JETLINER CABINS: Evolution & Innovation E-BOOK App* by Jennifer Coutts Clay, available at Amazon, Apple App Store and Google play.
www.JetlinerCabins.com.